THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA): (a) to (d) As per the report of Ministry of Water Resources, a Technical Team comprising officers from Government of Uttar Pradesh, Ganga Flood Control Commission (Patna), Ministry of Railways and the Central Water Commission was constituted and visited the site in May, 2007 to study the matter relating to river Ganga changing its course at Allahabad. The Technical Team observed that river Ganga was shifting towards the Phaphamau side during the last few years. It was observed that about 1.5-2.0 kms. upstream of the road and railway bridges, some erosion has taken place.

The Team also observed that the approach to the road and railway bridges is quite protected as boulders placed there are dampening the river flow. The existing road leading to Phaphamau town constructed parallel to river Ganga is around 600 to 700 metres away from the river flow and provides protection to the town. To check the erosion and meandering of the river upstream of the bridges, some protection works were undertaken by the Government of Uttar Pradesh. At present, there is no danger to the road and railway bridges or Phaphamau town from tangential flow.

The Team has recommended the need for (i) close monitoring of the flow pattern of the river during the current monsoon season, (ii) conducting a model study on the behavior of the river in the vicinity of the bridges, and (iii) carrying out morphological studies with remote sensing techniques within the 20 kms. reach of the river (10 kms. upstream and downstream of the bridges) by the State Government. The Ministry of Water Resources has already suggested to the Government of Uttar Pradesh to undertake the required studies and remedial measures.

Indo-China visa regime

*77. SHRI B.J. PANDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is proposed to liberalize Indo-China visa regime to enhance strategic cooperation;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether both the countries propose to work out a number of initiatives to boost tourism between the two countries; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (d) During the visit of Chinese President Hu Jintao to India in November 2006, the two countries agreed to a ten-pronged strategy to upgrade India-China relations to a qualitatively new level. The India-China Joint Declaration stated, "With a view to vigorously promoting tourism between India and China, the two sides shall organise the "India-China Year of Friendship Through Tourism" in 2007 with a joint logo and take other initiatives, such as opening of the office of the China National Tourism Administration in India and an Indian Tourism Office in China, improved air connectivity, and continued liberalisation of the visa regime." On February 14,2007,

during the visit of the Chinese Foreign Minister, India and China launched 'India-China Year of Friendship Through Tourism.' A joint logo and a monthly Action Plan till January 2008 were released on this occasion. Both countries have agreed to open tourism offices within this year. Based on the Consular Convention signed in 1991, Government have been reviewing and modifying guidelines for grant of visas to Chinese nationals to facilitate their travel to India for business, tourism and education.

Indians detected in Pakistani jails

*78. SHRI RAJEEV CHANDRASEKHAR: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a number of Indians visited Pakistan early this year and were allowed by Pakistan Government to visit certain jails in that country in search of their kin who were expected to have been languishing in Pak jails after 1965 and 1971 wars or otherwise strayed into that country without proper documents;

(b) if so, the number of Indians detected in Pakistani jails; and

(c) the action taken so far by Indian Government for their release and repatriation?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) to (c) Subsequent to the agreement reached during my visit to Islamabad in January 2007, a group comprising thirteen members of the families of missing defence personnel visited Pakistan from June 1.14.2007. They visited ten jails in Pakistan. Indian prisoners in the above prisons were presented before the relatives. No missing Defence personnel were located. However, it was confirmed that one of the missing personnel had been killed in action and not taken Prisoner of War.

Pruning of Centrally sponsored schemes

*79. SHRIMATI SHOBHANA BHARTIA:
PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Planning Commission's move to drastically prune Centrally sponsored schemes from 155 to just 24 and transfer of a bulk of the schemes to States has not been approved by Government.;

(b) whether Planning Commission has decided to take a comprehensive look into all the 300-plus Centrally sponsored schemes and see that some non-performing ones could be weeded out and some other merged with similar schemes to address the issue of funds for the social sector programmes; and

(c) whether Commission has taken a decision to provide funds to all the schemes during the Eleventh Plan period?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING (SHRI M.V. RAJASEKHARAN): (a) to (c) Plan Schemes are discontinued on the basis of Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) exercise and rationalization of Schemes during the course of a Plan. The primary purpose of ZBB exercise is to ensure convergence, efficiency and